

2 SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—CONTINUED FROM THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

The Break-up of the Indiana Legislature.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The proposed fifteenth amendment of the Constitution, sent out the other day from Congress to the States, and endorsed by General Grant in his inaugural address, provides that there shall be no abridgment by the United States or by any State of the right of suffrage on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, and that "Congress shall have power to enforce this provision by appropriate legislation."

This means impartial suffrage to all male citizens above the age of twenty-one years—whites, blacks, Indians, and Chinese. Half-a-dozen States have already ratified this amendment, and it was about to be taken up in the Indiana Legislature the other day, when the Democratic minority bolted, succeeded, and went home, leaving both houses without a quorum, and consequently incapable of any legislation at all.

The Democrats, in a act of secession, have been playing a ridiculous game. If they fill all these vacancies they will be only where they left off; but the probability is that from fear that if they have the chance they may play the same game over again, there will be a quorum elected to both houses without their consent. In the Republican event, the Democrats have been blundering again on the nigger. They still dream of "the Constitution as it was" under Buchanan, when, by the Dred Scott decision, a negro had "no rights which a white man was bound to respect."

But since that day two amendments have been added to the Constitution—the thirteenth, abolishing slavery root and branch, and the fourteenth, declaring, among other things, equality to niggers in the matter of civil rights, and that suffrage and representation shall go together. Now comes the fifteenth amendment, giving to the black man, to the red man, and the yellow man, the everlasting nigger, the Indian, and the Chinaman citizenized, the same right of suffrage as the white man. General Grant, too, thinks this amendment will settle all this business, and so he hopes it will be duly ratified by the States. This endorsement, there is every reason to believe, will carry this amendment through; for, says Richard, "the king's name is a tower of strength."

Why, then, will the Democrats persist in this folly of fighting the nigger, when they have been almost destroyed in their successive disasters on the nigger question since 1854? But for the stupidity of their Copperhead and Rebel leaders of the Tammany Convention, they might have run even General Grant a tight race, and they might have secured a handsome majority in the present House of Representatives. But instead of recognizing the "fixed facts" before them, the stupid managers of the party proclaimed the reconstruction acts of Congress "unconstitutional, revolutionary, null, and void," and so they were swamped again in '68, as they had been under Johnson on the same issue in '66. So they are out in the cold, watching and waiting for some providential smash-up of the Republican party, and apparently incapable of seeing anything to fight against but the almighty nigger. He is to them what a bit of red flannel is to an enraged bull or a turkey cock—an intolerable insult, to be resented, reckless of consequences.

Mr. Stewart's Grand Charity.

From the N. Y. World.

We are sorry to see Mr. Stewart's proposition, to make a pecuniary sacrifice for the sake of securing to himself the opportunity of bestowing his invaluable services as Secretary of the Treasury, treated in certain quarters as a kind of secular simony. There is no trace of simony in the transaction, for it has been expressly settled in the English courts that "bonds given to pay money to charitable uses or receiving the presentation to a living are not simoniacal."

It is equally unjust to Mr. Stewart to say that his disposition to fling the superfluous of his vast fortune to the poor has only been developed by the pressure of the awkward dilemma into which he was brought by his own and his Presidential patron's ignorance of the law. So far is this from being true, that it is now many years since Mr. Stewart publicly entreated Mr. George Peabody not to deprive Mr. Astor and himself of the pleasure and privilege of doing for the poor of New York what Mr. Peabody has done on so magnificent a scale for the poor of London and for the cause of education at the South. It is but commonly fair to suppose that the noble designs so long ago avowed by Mr. Stewart and Mr. Astor have ever since been ripening to fulfillment, and that their culmination has only been revealed, not precipitated, by Mr. Stewart's anxiety to serve the State.

This, which we repeat is, in our judgment, a fair supposition, will be made a beautiful certainty when Mr. Stewart, relieved from the cares of Federal office, devotes himself as a private citizen to the accomplishment of the grand scheme of charity by which he has now once more commended himself to the favor of Providence and the admiration of his fellow-men.

It would be monstrous to imagine that a man of Mr. Stewart's years and piety will not prefer, even to the honor of assisting President Grant and helping a national treasury out of a huddle, the enduring satisfaction of doing God's will in behalf of the least of these his brethren.

No Nonsense.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

The gentleman who was Secretary of State a few days ago, but who holds that office no longer, has, upon the occasion of surrendering his portfolio, given to the land, or at least to all distinguished personages therein who are in danger of being dined, a valuable lesson. The neighbors of Mr. Seward, in Auburn, not to be out of fashion, were naturally desirous of signaling the return of that gentleman to his own hearthstone, and of making a creditable exhibition of their own inestimable love and affection. But Mr. Seward was not to be caught; for, at his time of life, playing lion, and roaring to order, is, at any rate, a fatiguing business. So the retiring statesman wrote to Mr. George U. Peck, Secretary of the Reception Committee; and in this epistle he guarded against an ovation with admirable and comprehensive foresight. He "absolutely declines."

1. "Any Public Meeting." He will undoubtedly be glad to get back, but he will go through the raptures in private, and refuse to be embraced even by the most joyful of his friends in the presence of ten thousand gaping spectators. He will also refuse to make

education and rhetoric can pursue in the privacy of their own closets? Mr. Johnson's frightful example has probably closed Mr. Seward's mouth, at least for the present. Moreover, he declines to accept

3. "A Dinner." The passion for eating is one which we know, upon Scriptural authority, declines with declining years. "I am this day," said Buzzaiah, "eighty years old. Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?" Besides, it may reasonably be supposed that another warning has been afforded to Mr. Seward by the eating and drinking career of another Mr. Johnson across the water. Moreover, at a dinner, it would be almost impossible, without a rude violation of every precedent, to avoid making a speech. "Gabbara," says Babelais, "was the first inventor of drinking habits." Mr. Seward will refuse, also.

4. "A Procession." When one remembers of how many processions this gentleman has been the central figure and ornament, the reason of his disinclination may be readily surmised. None of these triumphal marches have concluded at the coveted goal. Reduced to its simple elements, there is but small enjoyment in the honor of being carted about in a barouche, with a brass band blowing its life out in front and another brass band puffing itself dead behind. It is only in such a situation, with melancholy thoughts of the coming cold in the head, that the recipient of ringing cheers can appreciate the safety and the satisfaction of wearing a hat. Again, Mr. Seward desires no

5. "A Ceremony." He shrinks from being treated like a Grand Lama, or a Grand Mufi, or a Grand Turk, or a Tycoon, or a Pope, or a Doge, or an Emperor, or a Pontifex Maximus. He knows that he is mortal. He feels himself to be human. He desires not "booting" and genuflections, the salam and the ko-tow. The primitive simplicity of shaking hands is enough for him. Finally, he objects to any

6. "Demonstration." He will not be exhibited, as if he had been caught by some hardy hunter five thousand miles from Auburn, and brought to that place as a curiosity. "Demonstrations" are well enough in mathematics, but not being a problem, except in a figurative sense of the word, he has no desire to have a "Q. E. D." tacked to his record. "Such things," as he truly observes, "are unnecessary."

We cannot help thinking that in setting his face against demonstrative lionization Mr. Seward has entitled himself to the thanks of all public men exposed to like dangers and subjected to similar temptations. The strong point in the dinner declined. The barouche refused was a great gain. The repudiated banquet is a positive blessing, and will be so considered here until Mr. Beverdy Johnson's performances in England are forgotten.

The Secretaryship of the Treasury.

From the N. Y. World.

The Republican journals throughout the country have helped General Grant dig the ditch into which his first step tumbled him; and, what is worse, the Herald, Tribune, Times, and Post have persisted in inviting him still deeper into the mire.

Had General Grant, inexperienced himself in civil affairs, taken of experienced and able men in his party that advice which none of the most experienced statesmen, his predecessors, ever declined to invite from their contemporaries, he would not now be asked to the decision of his opponents and the contempt of his party. The hostile criticism of the Democratic press, had it had some slight intimation of his designs to proceed upon, alone might have rescued him from accomplishing his blunders.

But these very organs of Republican opinion fed the presumption and the conceit which led General Grant to think himself superior to public opinion. When he told the public marvellous things that plain common sense would do. They cast scorn upon "politicians," upon experience in civil affairs, upon learning in the law, upon an acquaintance with the traditions and the practices of statesmanship. They added the Chief Magistrate of thirty eight millions of people to the number of things which—as Sidney Smith said of driving a gig and editing a newspaper—every man was entitled to think himself competent to, without experience or education. They applauded his reticence as if it were a substantial kind of power or a quality of genius which was going to help him administer the Government. They cooperated with General Grant's own ignorance to keep him from the knowledge which he lacked and the counsel which was indispensable to him. It turns out that public opinion, which is worth a statesman's heed, might have been useful also in discharging his promise to execute the laws.

But why did these blind leaders persist in dragging on their blind man deeper into the mire. The Tribune called Mr. Stewart as the "financial reformer" whom it is useless to try to match, and who, being Secretary of the Treasury, would "be as impartial and sternly just as an archangel" in passing on his own transactions as an importer. The fatuous and illiterate Herald wanted the law of 1789 to be "submitted to the Supreme Court" (1), where it would at once be condemned as "federal," whatever that may mean, and "unconstitutional." The Times disgraced its intelligence by urging, rather than "the repeal of the law," the exemption of Mr. Stewart from its operation by joint resolution. The Post, with due severity, declared itself all ready to applaud the President's "own decision in judgment," whatever it might be, and then advised that a common law maxim controls a statute speaking in positive and decided language. Was ever such a chorus!

Now, the statute of 1789 is entitled to great weight as mere authority. It was enacted, after deliberation, by the splendid statesmen of the revolutionary and constitutional era of our Government. Human affairs nor human nature have not since altered in kind. If it was wise then, it is wise now. Our growth and greatness as a nation only add to the number and weight of the reasons for its establishment. As for Mr. Stewart, he is the first man to whom its provisions apply, but he is also first and chiefest of that class and description of men now alive to whom it was meant to apply.

That provision of the act of 1789 prohibiting the manager of the national finances from being at the same time engaged in any private business which would give him a personal interest that might bias his mind in his public action, is founded on the most obvious and elementary principles of prudence and morality. It is the same principle which the law applies to all trustees and fiduciaries of what ever sort; that they must have no interest which is or may be in conflict with their duty. If the founders of the republic had enacted no such law as the eighth section of that act, it ought now to be enacted at once. If it were not the law, the principle upon which it is founded ought to be respected as a rule of prudence and a dictate of morality. The unadvised common sense of which we have heard so much has not been competent to this sense of decorum, of propriety of morality; for General Grant appointed Mr. Stewart. And if Mr. Stewart at first accepted the appointment, no man can say that a life-

long trading in trade, in the faculty to buy cheap and sell dear, should have fitted him to appreciate the indecorum of that act. But a lawyer or a publicist, or even a "politician," familiar with higher standards and the more refined codes of human action—had such man's advice not been sought as superfluous—might have forewarned them of what they have now incurred.

No doubt it would have been a serious practical difficulty that, if the largest dealer with the Government, if the largest importer, were to represent the Government at the head of its finances, he would have daily to act on cases in which he would be interested adversely to the Government. But that mischief, which is all that the Republican press of this city considered—that mischief which the "archangelic" purity of Mr. Stewart might indeed easily overcome—was about the least of all the mischiefs incident to the situation.

The unwise, unguided influence of him, the superior officer, upon his subordinates would have been utterly destructive to all the motives which are relied on to insure the protection of the Government in the dealings of men with the head of the Treasury. Mr. Stewart might both be an archangel and have angels at the head of every bureau; but for his clerks and agents, and for the Government's appraisers and collectors and customs officials, he could not have drawn upon the angelic host.

The intrinsic, radical and overwhelming evil of the situation was this:—The Secretary of the Treasury is not only required by law to advise Congress as to the measures it should pass to improve the revenue, as to the taxes it shall put on and the taxes it shall take off, and generally as to the fiscal and financial legislation it shall enact, but in the practical administration of his department so wide a limit of discretion is conferred upon that officer, and so vast are the transactions of the Government compared with those of private business, that the Secretary has become the practical regulator and controller of the gold market, thereby of the rates of foreign exchange, thereby of the cost of all imported goods, thereby of the prices of all our exported commodities—wheat, corn, flour, tobacco, cotton, petroleum, beef, and pork. He has also become the controller of the money market. He determines the abundance or scarcity of loanable capital, the rate of interest, and thereby the prices of securities and stocks as well as merchandise. Whether so wide a discretion was wise or necessary is not the question. Under the legislation of the last nine years and the growth of our debt, it exists.

Now, that Mr. Stewart, the importer who has in occasion to buy more exchange than any man in these States, should continue to direct the operations of his house in purchasing gold or exchanging and remitting to pay for his exported goods; and that Mr. Stewart, the Secretary, should at the same time decide whether or not the Government should sell gold, having on hand, with authority to sell, a quantity so vast that the sale of a fifth of it would depress its price and make a convulsion from Wall street to San Francisco—this, we say, is an absurd, an impossible situation, act or no act of 1789. But this act, with its charity for human weakness, marks and defines the absurdity and impossibility of the situation.

Neither General Grant nor Mr. Stewart nor the Republican press of this city (all alike ignorant), he would not now be asked to perceive this obvious principle of prudence and morality upon which the law was based. But how did none of them see, what is better suited to their faculties to see, that Mr. Stewart in so false and absurd a situation could not possibly have or keep the public confidence? Were he, as Secretary, to sell gold or adopt any measure which should depress the foreign exchange, and thereby cause, as so often has happened, a fall in the price of our exported commodities and an interruption in the course of industry and trade—cannot he see, cannot everybody see, that all men who were damaged in their interests thereby would have said that Mr. Stewart was buying gold or exchange and trying to buy it cheap?

If, on the other hand, he were to allow the rate of exchange to rise, would not every man whose interest was in its fall have felt and said that Mr. Stewart, having got his exchange, was now putting up his goods which were yet to be sold?

And though Mr. Stewart were to reap profits only from his business for the next four years, as it would be hard to prevent his firm from doing were he Secretary of the Treasury, and were he to devote those profits to New York charities, would his rivals fail to feel or fail to say that in those profits he, the munificent bestower of them, had an interest, direct and indirect, utterly beyond what he could have were they simply flowing into his private coffers. For, were those profits small, rival merchants would suffer by his underselling them, and he would draw a still larger stream of custom to his bazaars. He might praise his own business sagacity a year or two ago in running its establishment a twelve-month at no profit, and doubtless the policy was sagacious.

On the other hand, were the profits of Mr. Stewart's business large and the sums bestowed upon our charities considerable, would he have no interest, direct or indirect, in such a world-wide advertisement of his liberality and wealth? Six millions in four years, if it went to his bank accounts, could neither increase the sum of his present luxuries or comforts, nor the popular awe before, or the respect for, him. But this bestowal, if it would aggrandize his real possessions, and confer upon him something wherein no other human being's "interest" could equal his—namely, a fame beside which John Jacob Astor's, Smithson's, and Peabody's would pale, and which he, like Peabody, would be living to enjoy. Mr. Stewart's "interest" in his private profits for four years would be insignificant beside his interest in such public munificence.

Yet we would not dogmatize on the law of 1789. Mr. Stewart at least knew enough when his trouble was manifest to seek and be guided by competent legal advisers, even if his letter to the President stigmatizes these disabilities as "technical," which they deemed insuperable. But his nomination was not fit to have been made, and General Grant has been driven to perceive it, despite the journals which invited him from blunder to blunder.

FINANCIAL.

Meanwhile, however, Mr. Johnson, in England, says nothing whatever about Grant, or about keeping his office. He has much else to do in talking to the outland and stray platters and dumplings, and to keeping all England in a roar of good humor, and in making known that the Alabama business is at last settled. We somehow fancy, too, that he never had any thoughts of retaining his office, and that in any event, with his accustomed gallantry, he would "bow to the setting, not to the rising sun."

In general, however, we may conclude that all our foreign ministers and consuls are strong and outspoken supporters of the new administration, as is fitting, and that all have been "original Grant men" ever since last November at least. Our private conviction is, that they have also been "Washington men" from the start, and that they don't care who knows it.

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